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interest in the family of the dead, sometimes caring little with whom the widow lives so long as they get their shares of the bridewealth of her daughters. 587

One finds that, in practice, a young widow who has borne her husband a single child sometimes lives with strangers. The husband's kin try to persuade her to live with a brother, but if they fail, they often, especially in eastern Nuerland, reconcile themselves to her obduracy, though they may insist that she continues to live in their village, as a member of their home, and there bear children to her dead husband by a lover. If she refuses this stipulation they can divorce her, leaving with her parents six head of the bridewealth cattle to retain their rights in the child. If she agrees to it they have few grounds for complaint. The children she bears by a lover are not only their kin but they are born amidst them and reared by them, and the lover not only begets children for them but also acts as their protector and breadwinner if he is a member of the village, or frequently visits the mother to assist her in gardening if he lives in a neighbouring village. 589

The position of a widow who has borne her husband two or more children is different. The return of her bridewealth cannot in any case be demanded: '*Ghok te jokdien ka nath ca ka de lony*', 'Cattle which have people (children) on their backs cannot be loosened (returned).' In these circumstances a woman is free to live where and with whom she pleases, and in fact many Nuer widows of this seniority do not live with kinsmen of their dead husbands but 'give birth in the bush' (*'dieth dor'*), as the Nuer say. Wherever a widow lives and by whomsoever her children are begotten, they are all children of the dead husband and their kin will claim them sooner or later. When she is old and past child-bearing she will probably return to her husband's home to be with her grown-up sons. A widow who has grown-up children at the time of her husband's death will not want to take a lover. She will choose to live with one of her children.

A widow is asked to make her choice at her husband's mortuary ceremony. The kin are not likely to challenge her decision on this solemn occasion. If she refuses the brothers and sons of her husband, they ask her whether she wishes to take a lover away from their village (*lum dor*) or to take a lover in the village (*lum cieng*). They hope that she will choose the latter alternative. However, widows often elect to return to their paternal homes and there take

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589 lovers, so that, as we have earlier noted, it often comes about that children are brought up among their maternal kin. Many widows neither remain for long in the homes of their dead husbands nor in the homes of their own kinsfolk, but after a while go to live with lovers, sometimes in different districts and even in different tribal areas. Relations between a widow and her lover tend to be unstable, and she often abandons one lover to take another. She may wander from place to place. If her children by her husband are small she takes them with her, so during childhood they are members of the households of her lovers, who act as their foster-fathers. Thus a widow may go to live with a lover accompanied by children begotten both by her husband and by former lovers. Some old widows, long past child-bearing, live with men to cook for them, the man having no wife and the widow no adult children to look after her.

588 When a widow lives with a man who is not of her husband's kin we have a different kind of union to that of leviratic marriage. Indeed, it cannot be regarded as marriage in any sense, but must be regarded as a form of concubinage. I call it widow-concubinage. A widow-concubine—that is to say, a widow who takes a stranger for a lover—is called in Nuer a *ciek ma lak*, and a child of such a union is called a *gat laka*, a child of concubinage. The structure of the original simple legal family remains unimpaired, however much the configuration of the household may change: it consists throughout of the wife, the husband who married her with cattle, and the children of the wife. Whoever begets these children, their pater is the husband of their mother. The *concubinus* does not stand in the place of the husband and has therefore no authority over the wife. He cannot compel her to live with him—she goes from man to man or has a succession of lovers in her own home as she feels inclined—and he has no redress if she has relations with other men while she is living with him. His position is thus very different from that of a man living in leviratic marriage. Likewise, he has no legal control over the children, who can be taken away from him by the kin of their pater whenever they choose to remove them. He is only their genitor, and his sole right in them lies in the obligation of their paternal kin to pay him a 'cow of the begetting' when each of his natural daughters by the widow is married. His position in this respect also is very different from that of a levir. A brother stands in the place of the pater, a lover